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FROM THE EDITORS

We seem to have two major impulses, at least when it comes to our interactions with other people. Part of us wants to share, to enjoy family and friends, to greet acquaintances and sales staff at the supermarket, and to take a lively interest in community, at home and further afield.

The other influence is to draw into ourselves, to take time out, even to shun the company and demands of living in community.

Of course, neither impulse in itself is either bad or good. We need others. We need safe space to be alone. The Christian Faith acknowledges both impulses. While we are constantly surrounded by a great crowd of witnesses, we also need to go apart and pray. It's the perversion of these impulses that gets us into trou-

ble. We can become irritating busybodies, out to use and abuse others, constantly demanding change, never satisfied with things as they are. On the other hand we can become so totally self-centered, that we cut off even those who love us and live in misanthropic isolation.

Of course, both perversions of natural impulses boil down to pride, an obsession with self. Yet, as Christians, the Church's doctrine of the Communion of Saints is a realized reminder that we are never alone. The Church is much more than our parish, diocese, the Episcopal Church, the Anglican Communion, or the sum total of Christians who are alive at this moment. We live in company with those we see no more, and particularly those who have been lights to their several generations, whose hope was in Jesus, and who faithfully followed in the beliefs and practices of the Apostles.

We hope the articles that follow will encourage you as you "run the race that is set before you, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith." If this proves to be the case, do share The Anglican Digest with your friends and neighbors, order subscriptions for them, or get your parish to send us the mailing list so that we can send a free year's subscription to each parishioner.

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BY THE REV. HUGH C. EDSALL

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ALL YE SPIRITS AND SOULS OF THE RIGHTEOUS...

Dr. Derek Olsen Baltimore, MD

cold wind flaps my coat-tails and whirls a cloud of dead leaves about my feet as I walk my daughter to the bus stop. They rasp voicelessly on the concrete and my thoughts finds them a flock with words. warnings, pleas, spoken-but not understood. A passage of Homer flickers to mind: Odysseus, sword drawn, keeping the rustling flock of shades at bay from the invigorating blood of the black sheep that gives voice to a fallen comrade, to an ancient prophet, to the hero's mother-strangers joined in death. For the dead have been on my mind.

It's only natural, I suppose in the most literal kind of way. As the sun rounds another corner, the hours of night

overtake the day; the vibrant star's light dims to watery wintry shadow and, harvest passing, the fields fall fallowcorn stubble awaiting a blanket of snow. The signs of the earth turn to sleep or death. With signals like these it's only natural my pagan precursors identified the passage from day's supremacy to night's to be a passage between worlds, a time when the dead souls return to be blown about our lands toothlessly muttering words, warnings, pleas to the living. With the coming of Christ to the British Isles, the soul cakes were offered to wandering strangers rather than the family dead; flickering faces lit visitors rather than turning away spiteful spirits. All Hallows' Eve, All Hallows, and All Souls replaced and displaced the former pagan feast.

All Hallows—or All Saints as we know it now (the Latin "saints" replacing the Sax-

on with the same sense)—is something of a confusion in these latter days. Who we remember, what we remember, and why has been blurredsometimes by accident, sometimes on purpose. All Saints, All Souls, and the difference between them lie at the intersection of the Church's musings on Scripture, on the Church Expectant, the Church Triumphant, and the overarching principle of the baptized dead knit into the living Christ.

All Hallows is for the Church Triumphant, those spirits and souls of the righteous who already rejoice in the ineffable splendor of the appearance of the glory of God. For these are those who already harmonize in the great chorus and who unceasingly lay down their petitions before the Throne, praying for us who yet linger here.

All Souls is for the Church Expectant who rest from their labors, who sleep in the earth awaiting the last trumpet when the earth shall flee away, the sky roll like a scroll, and our great company shall throng to the judgment seat.

Images fill my mind, of the Great Judgment, the Last Day, snatches of songs, paintings half-remembered from medieval books on penitence and prayer. Pre-modern in aspect, pre-modern in assumptions, a pervading truth permeates the scenes. It shall not be as they envisioned, it shall not be as I envision and yet...

And yet...

My mind turns to the font and the flood for this is the center of this belief that yea, though they die, yet shall they live, knit to the marrow, the sinew, the bone, knit in the body of the Living Christ. Held in the mind of God, held in the heart of God, whatever our state of wake or rest we are hid with Christ in God.

+ + +

Today we walked amongst the dead. As sunlight filtered through fallen lives, my girls and I sat with gravestones. Walnuts lay thick, their husks and shells, and we sat and filled bags-much to the squirrels' chagrin. Down on my knees, I dug the nuts from the tall grasses, cleared them away with the rest of the parish volunteers. My flirtatious five-year old, finding a friend, laughed and skipped as she gathered the shells, laughter pealing like little bells over mossy stones and markers. The other, tired, threw herself upon a marble slab and stared at the sunlit sky. At first I tried to hush and shush them, to remind them of the reverence due this place, and then I thought of the music of voices and of how they rang in this silent space and remembered that we walked among friends. And a trumpet sounded its clarion call, the sound drifting

over the waiting stones, but it came from the organ inside of the church that lay at the center of the stones—tuning for the day's second service. St. Paul's words then came to my mind: "Sleeper awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light."

No Homeric scene this with the blood of goats and shades that mutter and warn. There is blood, it gives life-but not as the old poet sang. For the cup that we share and the loaf that we break is a sharing in the life of our God. And here in the churchyard we gather as one-those on high, those in sleep, those awake-and we gather at the table that is an altar and a tomb and we share in the mysteries of God. For the communion we share links the living and dead, finds all those knit together in Christ, and invites us to share in the promise of that place, a life hid together in God.

DEM BONES, Dem dry bones

THE VERY REV. ANTHONY F.M. CLAVIER
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nce the Church emerged from centuries of persecution, it was natural that they built churches over the tombs of their martyrs. Our practice of dedicating churches to a specific saint or saints began in that manner. In the Middle Ages, the practice emerged of placing a relic of a saint in a stone on the altar. Granted, this occasioned an industry selling bones of dubious authenticity; no practice known to man is immune to abuse. The tradition was virtuous and inspired devotion; corruption calls for reformation, not for destruction.

In reaction against this abuse, many post-Reformation churches were dedicated to the Trinity, or Christ, or Emmanuel, or Grace. Angli-

cans stripped the calendar to a bare minimum. Gradually we have swung back to an appreciation of saints and martyrs and their place in our corporate and individual lives.

"The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." So wrote Tertullian, a third century Christian writer who lived in North Africa. He knew whereof he spoke. Before Constantine brought peace to the Church, Christians went through periods of violent persecution. They found solace and encouragement in the heroism of men and women, clergy and laity, of every class and race, who suffered and died during the persecutions.

As we remember these people in our daily worship, it is good to acknowledge that they are not dead exemplars, like George Washington or Florence Nightingale. It's odd that many of us shudder when we see a statue or icon in our

churches, yet think nothing of the statues erected of public people of note in our parks and city squares. Just as the photographs of our "dead" relatives remind us of them and bring back floods of memories, that grandfather or sister "come to life," so the collects and lessons we read on the feasts of the saints and martyrs not only present to us facts about heroic Christians, they bring them to life.

This bringing to life isn't an illusion. Jesus said that if we believe in him we shall never die. It's easy to take this as hyperbole or merely a lovely poetic thought. Yet every time we recite the Creed, we state that we believe in the Communion of Saints. "Communion" in Greek means fellowship, a coming together, an enjoying of being "in the crowd." In the Creed, we say that we believe that we are actually in the crowd, the crowd of the departed or, if you must, the

dead. We have fellowship with them, pray with them, are loved by them, and worship God with them.

Perhaps not so much now, but earlier in the twentieth century a movement arose called Spiritualism. Some rather distinguished people, such as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the author of the Sherlock Holmes stories, were drawn to it. Amidst the carnage of the First World War, many bereaved desperately sought to be in touch with their departed relatives. People styled "mediums" conducted séances. Most were charlatans, ready to profit from people's grief. Had the church not spiritualized the Communion of Saints, Spiritualism may not have occurred. Such a stress was placed on communion with the great saints, that an awareness of our communion with ordinary saints evaporated.

The New Testament calls all baptized people saints. As

Christians "moralized" sanctity, confusing being good with being saved, a certain doubt arose as to whether our bad tempered Aunt Edith was in heaven or hell, was "in the crowd" that surrounds us or being regularly toasted by the bad-tempered devil.

Heroic virtue doesn't imply character perfection. Think of St. Wilfred or St. Jerome. Both were renowned for their tempers, yet they inspired such devotion that they were singled out as special saints among ordinary saints. Despite their fallenness, their lives exhibited an extraordinary devotion to our Lord and to his church. Most of us, and most of our ancestors, were much more ordinary. We share, however, in one baptism "for the remission of sins."

True, many of us, when we die, will land up in the "school for backward believers", as we come to be that which we are through baptism. Baptism

doesn't just work once and then run out like a dead battery. It works throughout our lives and beyond. As we "remember" Jesus in the Eucharist, he remembers us at the Eucharist because the visible sign of our baptism on our forehead is working, however great our failings.

It is so important that we realize that the Eucharist is not a place we meet to get a fix, to be healed and fed, just to make life easier. True we are healed and fed, but life may not get easier; indeed it may well get more difficult. The martyrs whose blood became the seed of the Church knew that. The Eucharist is the place where we step out of time into that place that, in time, will be when Christ comes again "in his glorious majesty to judge both the quick and the dead." There, at the heavenly banquet, we mingle in the crowd, the crowd of particular saints and ordinary saints, with bad

tempered Aunt Edith and the tipsy Uncle Bert, whose baptism has finally worked miracles.

Returning home after worship, we remain among that "cloud of witnesses" as we run, walk, stagger, or crawl in "the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." We are never alone, never deprived of caring companions. Even when we feel most isolated, our prayer can be, May blessed Mary and all the saints pray with me and for me. Amen.

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A MYSTICAL COMMUNION

The Rev. Trey Garland Georgetown, TX

"I believe in the communion of saints..."

hen I was at Sewanee as a seminarian, I was fortunate enough to be able to do my field education at All Saints' Chapel. It was the practice to record "1 + all the saints" in the service register when only the officiant was present at one of the daily offices. At the time, I thought it was just a peculiar thing that was a part of Sewanee life-but I didn't really get it. Twelve years after being ordained to the priesthood, I have a firmer understanding-but like most things in dealing with God and his most gracious will, parts of it remain a mystery.

As I have grown and learned, I have come to appreciate, and rely on, this mysterious communion of saints. A pure creedal understanding is that we are bound with our brothers and sisters who have gone before us in the same Body of which Jesus Christ is the head. As an unashamed and incorrigible Anglo-Catholic, I have brought both the intercessions of the saints and prayers for the dead to the parishes I have served (where such things did not already exist). It provides an excellent jumping-off point for talking about the communion of saints.

The first hurdle is: "Why are we praying for the dead?" Jesus answers this question for us in the twelfth chapter of Mark where he responds to the Sadducees' question about the resurrection. Jesus answers, "And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how

God spoke to him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not God of the dead, but of the living." They are alive to God. This communion is very present and we know that in the presence of the Holy and Triune God that they are alive. As the prayer from the burial office says: "Grant that, increasing in knowledge and love of thee, he may go from strength to strength in the life of perfect service in thy heavenly kingdom." We acknowledge within our liturgy that those who are dead to us are alive and in action before Christ.

The second hurdle is: "Why do we want this communion of saints to pray for us?" Let me be clear from the beginning that none of us require a mediator to pray to God. But I suspect all of us at one point or another may have asked someone to pray for us or found ourselves on a prayer

list. There is no difference, at least in my opinion, between asking the living to pray for me and asking the saints above to pray for me. For those who are strict readers of the Thirty Nine Articles, article XXII only prohibits the "Romish" doctrine of asking the saints intercession; it does not speak to the Patristic or Eastern views of the intercession of saints. (See John Henry Newman's *Tract 90*, part six.)

The biggest hurdle, though, at least in my own experience, has been the fact that we get nervous about supernatural mystery. As I look at my desk, I have a smart phone, a tablet, and a computer—all with the ability to search any topic and provide me with answers, and all waiting to do my will. I have become conditioned not to accept "unknown." Some of us, I think, cease to dwell in the mysteriousness of God and his love, and strive to find

answers, and become disenchanted with our spiritual life when we cannot find answers. The communion of saints is one of those things that we can only understand in part. By no means can we have a full understanding of this great blessing. Some things will simply have to wait until our own earthly pilgrimage has ended.

The next time you attend the Eucharist, pay attention. You, I, and those present are not the only ones who join our worship of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; rather it is "Angels and Archangels, and with all the company of heaven," who join in the wonder, love, and praise.

You and I are a part of this mystical communion that comes to praise and render thanks to God who loved us enough to allow his Son to die on the cross, that you and I might have eternal life.

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OUR CLOUD OF WITNESSES

The Rev. Dr. Walter V. Windsor Pine Bluff, AR

Hebrews 12:1

y parents divorced when I was in high school, but were always careful not to involve me in any tensions that were straining their relationship, determined that the relationship we shared would remain positive, without placing me in the middle of their situation. As it turned out, I lived with my mother and my father moved to another town. Even though we lived apart, I loved my father very much. Fortunately I got to spend some time with him in spite of the distance between us and I cherished those times we shared together.

A few years after the divorce, my father came for one of his visits and we spent the whole weekend doing those things fathers and sons do—simple things, which, on reflection, take on huge significance and mean the world as they become memories.

As the weekend grew to a close and it was time for my father to drive home, he said he wanted to talk to me about something very important. I knew this was going to be one of those emotional expressions of love, eliciting a response that was so easy to embrace as a small child curled up on Daddy's lap, yet somehow awkward and embarrassing as a teen growing into adulthood.

In my mind's eye, I can still see him sitting on the couch, patting the cushion next to him, "Son, come here a moment please..." I went over to where he was, it being all I could do to keep from rolling my eyes with vexation, lacking the depth and understanding to respond with the same grace that was being offered to me. Being callow, I might have

even been irritated by the unfolding situation. Anger and irritation, I am told, are often caused by fear. If so, my fear was caused by not wanting to be exposed, even in a little way, to the truth that I was not really being attentive enough to my father, showing and expressing my love more, or "doing those things I ought to have done." I was feeling the need to justify myself, before my father had even begun what he had to say.

I sat down beside my father. He placed his arm around my neck and drew me close, touching his forehead next to mine, looking straight into my eyes, as he had when I was a little boy. He said, "Van, when you look back on life, I want you to know how much I love you..." I couldn't bear it, "Oh dad, please..." Unwilling to be deterred he continued, "Listen to me son, when you think of the things you wish we had done, or times you wish you

had been there, or been available, maybe think of things you wished you had told me, or things you wish you had not said to me, when you reflect on bad or sad memories, know that I do not want you troubled."

He went on to say, "What matters is the love, and that is eternal. God gave you to me as a gift of love, and in God, that love is forever. I forgive you now for all things in the past, the present, and the future, and want you to know I love you more than life itself. Do you hear me?"

He had tears in his eyes, and I wanted to get away from the situation, so I said something like, "Yeah, Dad, of course I understand..." He smiled at me a knowing smile. My father knew what I was feeling and thinking, as he always seemed to, but I also believe that in his heart he believed that one day I would value the

gift of a precious memory. We hugged, he gave me a goodbye kiss, and waving to each other as he drove off, he was on his way home. I didn't know at the time, and he didn't, but he would soon be home—with God. Those were the last words my Daddy would speak to me; he died of a massive heart attack that night.

I am sure any of us, if given the knowledge that our last conversation with someone we love is about to take place, would offer these same kinds of thoughts as my father. What a gift of grace that conversation has been for me over the decades. I am sure too, that it reflects God's love for us. The sin, the separation, the justification, anxiety, and fear-none of it matters, only the love, and that is eternal. It is in love we are created, it is in love we are redeemed, and it is in love that God calls us to live into relationship with him.

We are all called to be saints of God, perhaps not with the capital "S," but saints none the less. As saints we are called to offer a witness to the love to which God has called us, not just with our mouths, but also through the example of our lives. My father offered me a great witness of love, a love flowing from God, and one that has been witnessed to, and lived out, in the lives of generations and generations of both big and little "s" saints.

God transcends time and space, and thereby, as part of the Body of Christ and members of God's Kingdom, so does that "Cloud of Witnesses," which surrounds us, embracing us with love, from this world into the next.

I am sure that when my father closed his eyes after seeing this world for the last time, he opened them to look into the face of Jesus. Nothing else mattered, only the love. I also have no doubt that one day I shall open my eyes and see my father again in the presence of Christ, one of those witnesses, where he will embrace me, and hold me fast, and I can tell him face to face, "Daddy, I love you."

THE EUCHARIST AND THE COMMUNION OF THE SAINTS

The Rev. Porter C. Taylor (© 2015) Overland Park, KS

In the fullness of time, put all things in subjection under your Christ, and bring us to that heavenly country where, with all your saints, we may enter the everlasting heritage of your sons and daughters; through Jesus Christ our Lord, the first-born of all creation, the head of the Church, and the author of our salvation.

1979 Book of Common Prayer, Eucharistic Prayer B, Rite II

he celebration of the Eucharist is the sacrament par excellence of the church and the primary locus of her communion with the triune God. Any theological conversation about the often-ambiguous "communion of the saints" must begin and end with a robust understanding of koinonia in, with, and through the Trinity. The powerful imagery of heavenly worship portrayed in Revelation 4-5 comes to earthly fruition in our own sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. It is my contention that the church militant is most connected to the church triumphant through her doxological and eucharistic worship.

Koinonia and the Godhead

In line with the writings of John Zizioulas, our first step toward true communion (koi-

nonia) must begin with the self-contained, mutual, and self-giving fellowship of the Trinity. Our koinonia with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is based on the invitation to participate in the love that overflows from, and has eternally existed within, the Three-in-One. To be truly human is to be in communion with God for there is no existence outside of and apart from him.

Throughout Scripture, God made it possible for his people to commune with him: he "tabernacled" with Israel as she wandered through the desert; God "took up residence" in the Temple in Jerusalem; he spoke through prophets, judges and kings and delivered his people time and time again. He was most fully revealed through the incarnation, life, teachings, ministry, healings, crucifixion, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus of Nazareth. Through Christ we have

been adopted into the covenant family of God and made co-heirs of his kingdom.

The sacramental life of the church draws us into deeper relationship with the Trinity. In the waters of baptism we are initiated as covenant family members and united with Christ's death and resurrection in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, we have communion with God when we celebrate the Eucharist as both the reaffirmation of our baptismal vows and the realization of our priestly (of all believers) calling to be the church.

Communion of the Saints

The hymn "The Church's One Foundation" states profoundly, "Yet she on earth hath union with God the Three in One; And mystic sweet communion with those whose rest is won." Communion with the saints only comes in and

through the union the church experiences with the Trinity. As both the "sacrament of the kingdom" and the "Sacrament of sacraments," the Church most fully experiences this union in her regular celebration of the Eucharist.

Whether you believe in life after death or the preferred "life after life after death"2 there is the hope and promise of union with those saints who have gone before and those who will come after. The Eucharist is not a form of religious magic but is rather the mystical, sweet union of God and Church transcending time and space through the power of the Holy Spirit. As we "lift up our hearts" in the Sursum Corda and sing the Sanctus we are, "Joining our voices with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven who forever sing..." Our oblation is local to our historical context but it is most importantly part of a universal, ongoing offering of praise and thanksgiving.

Scripture offers a few glimpses at the communion of the saints. Both the letter to the Hebrews and John's vision in Revelation provide the biblical framework for our participation in a covenant family much larger than the visible church. Additionally, Hebrews and Revelation should be seen as liturgical books—or at the very least letters containing liturgical visions and imagery. The reference to the "great cloud of witnesses" in Hebrews 12 and John's vision in Revelation 5:13, "Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, singing," are liturgical in nature. It is not that the communion of saints is im-

¹ Both quotations are references from *The Eucharist* by Protopresbyter Alexander Schmemann.

²N. T. Wright, Surprised By Hope

possible apart from liturgical worship, but rather that our worship of the Godhead is what makes any understanding of communion both possible and tangible.

Christ the Qualifier

Eucharistic worship is to the Father, through the Son, and by the Holy Spirit. In order to avoid talking about a vague religious order we must first add a qualifier to the phrase "the communion of the saints." Who or what is the qualifier? Jesus the Christ. We conclude our Eucharistic Prayer with the words, "By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and for ever. AMEN." The foundation of the church's communionthe very underpinnings of the combination of church militant and triumphant-is the second person of the Trinity whose sacrifice we remember (anamnesis) and whose flesh and blood we do eat and drink.

It is through the words and actions of our heartfelt praise and gratitude that we are connected to believers across all generations in a real and tangible sense. We have the hope that when the kingdom is fulfilled we will sit around the table in that heavenly country with brothers and sisters whom we have never met. Until that day, we are called to bring our oblation before the Lord with the confidence that we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses who are proclaiming, "To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" Communion begins and ends with the throne of God-may we find our fellows saints as we approach with humble confidence.

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IN COMMUNION

THE REV. JOHN MASON LOCK RED BANK, NJ

The Apostles' Creed states a belief in the Communion of Saints, and this comes after the affirmation of belief in the Holy Ghost. In that third paragraph of the Creed, the church proclaims her trust and belief in the on-going work of the Spirit: forgiving sins, raising to new life, building the one church of God, and establishing communion among its members.

I have frequently thought of this communion as principally a communion between the living and dead, what was classically called the Church Militant and Church Triumphant. It is a moving and powerful thought to consider how in the Holy Communion when the celebrant says, "Therefore with Angels and

Archangels and with all the company of heaven," we are acknowledging the presence of the church triumphant because of a union in prayer and worship. It makes one think of those saints who have preceded us—righteous servants of God who, as the 1979 Book of Common Prayer helpfully puts it, are both known to us and unknown.

This union of the dead with the living has both a near and far reach. On the one hand, there are those family members and loved ones, mentors and friends, who have preceded us in death. Their deaths put before us the cold truth that our earthly fellowship with them is at an end. There will be no more phone calls or letters, no more Christmases together or family dinners. In the deaths of these loved ones. we are especially touched by the feeling of absence, and yet the Church affirms an on-going communion, which is

rooted in the truth that charity never fails. The love that we feel for the deceased has a proper and right object in the person himself, who lives yet in and by God.

The far reach of this communion is of those saints whom we have not known personally but who have been witnesses to Christ in their generations. There are the saints of fame-St. Augustine and St. Thomas, St. Benedict and St. Francis-and then there are the unknown saints whom we know simply by the empirical fact that the Church survived through their age. By their quiet devotion and their sanctity, they transmitted the faith to their biological and spiritual children.

In the Church, we are united to this communion of saints particularly in the sacrament of Holy Communion. But here some caution needs to be exercised: we do not want

to adopt too quickly or readily a mythological and sentimental view of the after-life that fails to appreciate how that greater life is a complete transformation. Of the joy, love, and beauty of that life we receive only passing glimpses: the Scripture says that we see "through a glass darkly and eye hath not seen nor ear heard. what God hath prepared for those who love him." What we do not want to do, in thinking of this communion between the dead and living, is to conjure up images of fairy godmothers and friendly ghosts. We need to speak with theological clarity about what this communion is and how it is established and maintained.

I have already offered a hint of where I think we need to find the locus of this communion in referring to Holy Communion as the highest expression of this communion on earth. The center of Holy Communion is a communion and fel-

lowship with the Lord Jesus in the sacramental elements of his Body and Blood. It is in our union with him that we are united to one another. Our union with him is established by active faith, holy baptism, and regular Communion. It is in these that we are united to one another in consequence. Our peace with one another is built on the foundation of the truth that we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Another rich source for reflection on how the communion of saints is based on communion with Jesus is in considering the Scriptural assertion of Jesus as the *new* Adam. The opening chapters of Genesis relate how man falls away from communion with God. This comes about because Adam wants to live by his own light rather than the light of God—he will decide what to call good and what to call evil, rather than subjecting his will

to the Word of God. Adam and Eve's alienation from the Lord is succeeded by a break in the fellowship between brothers when Cain mercilessly slaughters his brother Abel. In the first sin, man said to God, I do not need you. In the second, he said to his brother, I do not need you. Adam's is a heritage of alienation, sin, and death.

The new Adam comes to teach us how to live in the light of God and in fellowship with one another. He tells his Father, even in the midst of the agony of death, that he needs him: "Into thy hands, I commend my spirit." The one who displays his superiority and moral perfection does not despise fellowship with sinful and broken humans. Rather. he works endlessly to restore them to God and to one another, as in the cleansing of the lepers who by this cleansing are permitted entrance into the worship of the temple

and freed from their status as untouchables.

By original sin, we belong to the old Adam—we are part of his communion, although this word can only be used equivocally since the lineage of Adam blindly smashes every act of communion and fellowship by sin and selfishness. By grace, we belong to the new Adam, our Lord Jesus. As St. John reminds us again and again, "truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ . . . and if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another" (1 John 1:3,7). As we belong to him and live in him, we become part of this spiritual family, this communion of saints that will ever grow in charity.

AN EXTENDED FAMILY REUNION

THE VERY REV. ANDREW S. HOOK SPRINGFIELD, IL

was raised, more or less, within the Mennonite tradition in a small city in Kansas that had a large Mennonite population. The surnames of Epp, Enz, Regier, Schmidt, and Reimer loomed large in my formation. My mother was originally a Reimer and her mother a Schmidt. From there, I can trace my tribe back to the second and largest Mennonite Colony in Russia, the Molotschna Colony. I grew up eating Verenika, Zwieback, and Pfeffernüße. Not only was I raised in the Mennonite Church, I was educated there. When I felt God calling me into ministry, I did so within the Mennonite Church where I received my undergraduate degrees from Mennonite institutions and then went to work as a Mennonite youth

minister. The Mennonite tradition runs deep in my veins and lineage; so deep that I am what you would refer to as an ethnic Mennonite—that is Mennonite not by faith alone, but by blood. Growing up in a Mennonite family, in a large Mennonite town, I had plenty of great aunts and uncles and cousins all over the place. Going to church, or to the Mennonite Central Committee Relief Sale, or out to dinner, could be the site of an extended family reunion.

Today when I look to the Communion of Saints, I see this extended family. But it wasn't always like that. About a decade ago, I would acknowledge the existence of this communion, and would agree that we can learn what it means to lead a Christ-like life from them, but I would have scoffed at the idea that the saints could somehow be of use to us in this life. From my perspective, the saints were

in Heaven and had no clue of what we were doing on Earth. Asking the saints to intercede for us, especially Mary, broke the First Commandment, and the statues built to them and venerated were breaking the Second Commandment. I leaned heavily on 1 Timothy 2:5, which clearly states that we need no one to intercede for us before God except for Jesus Christ. In other words, we don't need the saints.

Then God called me into the Episcopal Church to work as a youth minister and I began to read and reflect anew on many of the things that I had previously rejected. Thanks to the generosity of Grace Episcopal Church in Hutchinson and the Diocese of Western Kansas, I entered into a graduate program at a Roman Catholic university in Wichita to get my masters. As one of two Protestants in the program, I was surrouonded by Roman Catholics. I asked many

questions and, like a sponge, soaked up knowledge relating to the Church before the Reformation. This gave me a whole new perspective on the Communion of the Saints, and many other things as well.

I came to see the Church in a different light and with that, the saints. Before, I had the Church as a divine institution founded by Christ which exists on Earth and is somewhat separate from the faithful living in heaven. But I came to realize that, if the Church is the Body of Christ, and exists wherever his people are, then it must exist both on Earth and in heaven. The Church Militant and the Church Victorious are the same Church existing in different realms but unified in Christ, Because of this union we are all members of one family. With that revelation I came to see that the saints were truly my brothers and sisters. They were my family.

From there it wasn't much of a stretch to think that, just as I would ask a family member on Earth to pray for me, I could do the same to a family member in heaven. But one thing still made me feel uneasy, and that was the word "pray." In the Roman Catholic nomenclature, it is the norm to say that someone "prayed to the saints." To me, prayer is something that can only be offered to God. No human, in heaven or on Earth, is worthy of my prayers. To pray to another creature would be again breaking the first commandment.

While I was on my way towards a greater acceptance of the saints, that word, pray, gave me pause. Then I had another revelation. The word "pray" does not only mean supplication to God; it also means, and was used more often in earlier centuries to mean (consider the works of William Shakespeare), to petition or implore someone. While I could not pray to the saints, I could implore them. Semantics, yes. But important semantics.

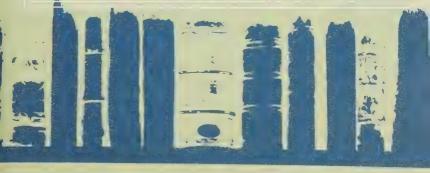
With those hurdles behind me, my eyes were opened to our wider family and I felt welcomed by all of my aunts, uncles, cousins, brothers, and sisters who are, like myself, servants of Christ. Not only that, I felt free to implore them to pray on my behalf to our mutual Lord just as I pray for my brothers and sisters living in the Church Militant. This, surprisingly for a former Mennonite, eventually led to a devotion to Our Lady.

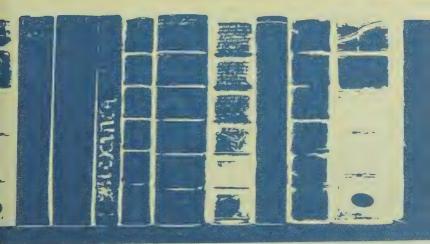
By God's grace, the revelations continued and I came to understand that there are no Roman Catholic saints in heaven, or Episcopal saints, or Anglican saints, or Mennonite saints. There are simply saints, saints of God who gave their lives for the furtherance of his

Kingdom. The saints in heaven are united as one people in their love for Christ. This should give us hope, for though we exist in a Church Militant that is filled with unhappy division, our family which has gone before us exists in a fully united community where the words one, holy, catholic, and apostolic are true down to their very core.

I love the saints and I love the comfort they give me, yet I also feel that a word of caution must be given lest we lose sight of our purpose. Our purpose is to serve God and God alone. The saints are not God. We have been given permission through our sacred tradition to implore them, and implore them we should, but we must keep a trained eye upon our devotion. Jesus is the King of the Saints and is our only mediator and advocate.

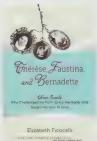
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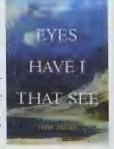
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THE COMMUNION OF THE SAINTS

THE REV. DR. ANTHONY B. HOLDER
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hen I grew up on the Caribbean is-land of Barbados, there was an old adage that was often said: "it takes a community to raise a child." And it did. People in a community came together for occasions like church, social events, fellowship, and meetings. We knew the people in our community and they knew us. We shared in community and met together for activities. In the same way, people in a particular area in Barbados functioned as a community; so too the communion of saints function as a community.

The communion of saints is an appropriate topic on which to ponder as we celebrate the Feast of All Saints on November 1, and the Commemoration of the Faithful Departed (All Souls) on November 2. All Saints Day is a time for the Church to remember with thankfulness and appreciation those whose lives bear witness to the love and blessing of God. The saints are a community which is gathered around Jesus, a fellowship that recognizes who they are and to whom their obedience, their commitment, and their faithfulness lie.

In the Apostles' or baptismal creed, Anglicans or Episcopalians, Roman Catholics, and other Christian denominations affirm their belief in the communion of saints: "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting." What does this reference to the "communion of saints" in the Apostles' Creed mean? Is it referring to those who have died, having lived

perfect lives in obedience to God? Is the communion of saints comprised of a few people who have reached a level of holiness that is unattainable by the average human being? Who are a part of the "communion of saints?"

Normally, when we think of the communion of saints. there is the tendency to focus on those who have died for the faith. We think of people who have followed in the footsteps of Christ and have been rewarded for their service in God's glory in heaven. However, the Greek word translated as "saint," in the New Testament is hagios or its plural, hagioi, which means "holy." The saints are the holy ones (Acts 9:13), not because of something inherent on their part, but because of the holy presence of Christ within them The word was not only used for the saints in heaven but to describe the early Christians when they were still alive. In the Acts of the Apostles, both Peter and Paul referred to the Christian believers as "saints" (Acts 9:32, 41; 26:10). Paul also addressed the Christians of the churches he wrote in a number of his letters as "saints" (Rom. 8:27, 12:13; 1 Cor. 14:33; Eph.1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:2). He also referred to them as "called to be saints" (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2). Paul spoke of all Christians as being the "holy ones," because they were made holy as a result of their baptism and continue to strive toward holiness. God calls all Christians to "be holy yourselves in all your conduct; for it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy" (1 Pet. 1:5-16).

Thus, "the communion of saints" is often portrayed in three ways:

• The Church Militant, the Christian believers who are alive and are members of the Church, the Body of Christ, through their baptism.

• The Church Expectant or Penitent, those who have died, passing from this life into the presence of Christ, having "fought the good fight, having finished the race, and having kept the faith" (2 Tim.4:7). In some places, the lives of these faithful Christian believers are celebrated on All Souls' Day.

• The Church Triumphant, who have left this life and having perfected holiness and obedience, are now in heaven with God and sharing in His divine nature. These are the ones we typically remember on All Saints' Day and who are referred to as "St. Peter, St. Paul, St. Mary Magdalene, St. James, and the like."

The saints who have gone before us, whether as the Church Expectant or the Church Triumphant, have shown us, the Church Militant, the way to embark on our life's journey of faith. They have demonstrated to us how to follow Jesus Christ and to live as his follow-

ers. They have lived as Christ's disciples having read from and cherished the same book that we do, the Bible. They tried to live by word and example the same Scriptures that you and I seek to live.

Those who are a part of the communion of saints share in a fellowship, a close relationship, a spiritual union, with God and each other, having been called by him to be faithful, holy, and filled with his grace. Just as those who have gone before us, we who are still alive give our lives completely over to God who loves us and redeems us. "For we have been created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared to be our way of life" (Eph. 2:10). We have been set free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2), and have passed from spiritual death to eternal life (1 John 3:16). A saint is one who lives a life of love and service to God and others. A saint is one who struggles against many temptations and weaknesses, sometimes successfully overcoming them and sometimes not. A saint is a sinner who has been forgiven by God when he or she stumbles and falls and seeks to live a better, fuller life in him. As saints, we work together through the power of the Holy Spirit to continue working for the expansion of God's kingdom. As members of the communion of saints, we share all these things in common with each other, knowing full well that membership in this community cannot be destroyed or taken away from us, but will last until eternity.

Thus, the communion of the saints are the faithful Christian believers of the past, present, and future who share in Christ's salvation. We have been chosen and set apart to do whatever God has assigned for us to do. This is our vocation—to be of service to God and to each other. Therefore,

as a community of saints, we are all one family, united together by the common bond of being God's children by adoption (John 1:12-13), forgiven through his death, and saved by his life (Romans 5:10). This is a message that we need to share with everyone, not only when we celebrate All Saints' Day, but each and every day. Furthermore, since death does not separate us from the love of God nor break the relationship between the living and the dead, it does not separate us from that community of saints. As a result, the "communion of saints" is the Church, the members of the Body of Christ, living, departed, and those yet unborn who will become a part of the fellowship, with Jesus as its head.

This message of community speaks loudly to people, particularly here in the United States, who do not feel a sense of community in spite of quicker communication methods

through modern technology. In spite of cell phones, texting, social media, and e-mail, people still feel disconnected from extended family, history, community, and even within their own family in the home. They feel that there is something missing in their lives. Recently, I spoke to one of my neighbors who spent a two-week vacation in Italy, and she was commenting on the welcoming, friendly, community-spirit that existed there, and felt this element was missing in the United States. To such disconnected people, the message

of being part of the communion of saints speaks volumes.

On All Saints' Day, when we celebrate the communion of all the saints, let us remember the faithful people who have preceded us in the life and journey of faith, the committed believers who are currently keeping the faith, and those who will come after us in continuing that faith. Let our lives be true examples of the faith which we hold dear, so that others can truly recognize us as members of the communion of saints.

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OUR COMMON LIFE

THE REV. BENJAMIN D. HANKINSON, JR. Mt. VERNON, IL

Have you ever asked or been asked: "Why do we have special days to celebrate saints?" or "Why do we add Mary and other saints to the prayers?" or "What do we mean when we say 'I believe in the communion of the saints'?"

Each time that I reflect on the topic of the saints-not just those heroic witnesses but all the faithful departed—it is not only the saints and their lives which hold my attention, but what we have in common, our shared communion. That word makes its way into a number of conversations and activities in the life of the church. We hear it in the intentional relationships of the faithful one to another. We find it in our sacramental life and the coming together of

the church to celebrate in particular the Eucharist. Delving into the history of our shared communion, we find from the early days of the church an inclusion of the saints in our common life of prayer, in recognition not only of the past but of the present reality that, as we give thanks, we step out of time and space into the transcendent fullness of the Christian community gathered together across the ages. We are gathered with all the saints as one holy catholic and apostolic church, as the one mystical body of Christ. We are in, and share communion with, the saints because of that which we hold in common: one body and one Spirit; one hope in God's call to us; one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism: one God and Father of all; one bread and one cup. In Christ, and by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we are one with the saints

As one, we who continue in our earthly pilgrimage listen to their words and example so that we might learn to grow in faith. Just as we pay attention to those around us whom we love and trust, we likewise sit at the feet of the faithful who have gone before us. From the saints in each generation we receive the collective treasure of Christianity, and from their witness we bring forth what is old to understand anew the things of which Jesus speaks and to which he calls each and every one of us. By their lives, we see the fruit of a life in Christ, a life which stands at odds with those who oppose the kingdom.

Blessed John Keble once said:

This is how the devil would beguile us . . . he would have us believe, either that there never were any saints, any persons really good and holy, or that if there have been

any, they were such by a kind of miracle, and that their example is nothing to us . . . Almighty God has called all Christian people from old times to learn and say, I believe in the Communion of Saints: that is, I believe in the gracious working of God's Holy and Almighty Spirit, entering into sinful men, uniting them to Jesus Christ as members of him, separating them from the evil world, keeping them from all wilful and serious sin, and making them truly and really holy. - Sympathy with Saints and Martyrs.

We draw near to the saints because we find in them living examples of holiness both great and small, and in them we are reminded that the life of faith is ever a call to holiness. The world, the sinful desires of the flesh, and the devil would have us believe

that holiness is an impossibility. The saints stand in opposition to that impossibility and encourage us in our own sanctification. When it feels like the church is in tough times, I recall the story of Athanasius, Or when I wonder about church discipline, I am tempted to reflect on the potential example Nicholas of Myra at Nicea. Or when we find ourselves being grilled for our faith, I think of Lawrence. While some stories of the saints may be apocryphal at best, what we find in the substance of their lives and collective example are people striving by the grace of God to live out the faith. We look to the saints when the road is rough, when the church is in turmoil, when the light seems to have all but gone out, because when we look to the saints, they point not to themselves but to Christ. And in their witness, we see the manner in which we are to draw others to faith: not

by proclaiming ourselves, but by pointing to Christ, and by throwing ourselves on his mercy and on his cross.

We celebrate their lives because they have already run with wonderful grace and virtue the race in which we still strive to persevere as vessels of God's grace and light to the world around us. We pray for them even as we bid them to pray for us because we believe the words "for to thy faithful people, O Lord, life is changed, not ended; and when our mortal body doth lie in death, there is prepared for us a dwelling place eternal in the heavens" (1979 BCP, Preface for Commemoration of the Dead). We believe in the communion of the saints because we hold fast to the faith once delivered, passed down from generation to generation as a joyous pledge of the hope of our calling by the obedient example of their righteousness.

With John Keble:

"I believe that there have been, are, and will be saints, holy persons, men and women, lifted, by God's mercy blessing their own hearty and humble endeavours, above the level of ordinary Christians: and believing this, I am without excuse, if I mistrust the power of the same Spirit to preserve me from wilful and habitual sin: I am without excuse, if I knowingly give way to any temptation, under the plea of its being irresistible."

I believe in the communion of the saints because with them I hold fast to our common faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, to the power of the Holy Spirit, and to the grace, mercy, and love of our heavenly Father.

HOLY ADVENTURE

The Rev. Blake Sawicky St. Louis, MO

s a kid I was fascinated by adventure stories, in books and film. Star Wars comes to mind and so does Jules Verne's Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea. Later on, I discovered C. S. Lewis and the Narnia books, and Tolkien's Middle Earth. More recently, I loved the film Finding Neverland about the life of Peter Pan author J. M. Barrie and I was not the only one to get swept up in the Harry Potter series. Some of these adventure stories have a bent towards naturalism. some are pure science fiction, others verge on fantasy, while others are located at the intersection of myth, "real life," religious symbolism, and the creative process in general. Each of them is very different from the others

Yet they all share one common feature: whether through accident, fortune, destiny, or providence, each of their protagonists is brought to an awareness of a whole world they did not previously know existed. From Luke Skywalker and the Force, to the Pevensies and Narnia, to J.M. Barrie and the wondrous world of ordinary things, each of them finds their horizon expanded to encompass a broader spectrum of time, place, and people than they might otherwise have thought possible. Much of these stories' appeal lies in the way we as readers (or viewers) tag along as the characters explore the worlds opening before them, and in the way we participate—however distantly or vicariously in what those worlds have to offer.

While it's possible to fall prey to escapism with this sort of writing, it can also point us back to our own lives and our

own communities. All around us, there is usually more happening than meets the eye. Lots of stories go untold, unwritten, and unread. past stretches behind us, every passing moment another door closed to all but scholars and memory. The future lies ahead, misty and inscrutable apart from a volatile composite of predictions, forecasts, and the limitless potential of human personalities. Every person, every corner of our lives, is a treasure trove of undiscovered country. New worlds await us at every turn, and adventure stories remind us that we had better get busy exploring them: there is an awful lot to see and learn and do before time disappears, or the neighbors move away, or we are given new responsibilities at work.

But what happens when the books close, on the stories and on life? Occasionally, I have

felt sheepish to realize I was in (minor) grief after the last page of a novel. More serious griefs occur all the time, as we say goodbye to loved ones, close the door on possibilities we had once cherished. and come to terms with normal constraints of time and resources which reduce the scope of our imaginations. Children die young. Marriages end. Some people never find love. Some are passed over in the promotion race. Others possess great gifts which go unrecognized, while some never possess the gifts they wish they had. Healthy fruit can wither on the vine. In griefs like these, the wide open horizons of the adventure stories seem unrealistic, as all-too-real constraints and boundaries close in. Is this the end of our own stories? Or is there more?

As Christians, we are used to pointing to Jesus as evidence that our stories do not have to end, even when all signs point in that direction. When Iesus died on the cross, everyone thought that was the end. But on the third day he rose again, and here we are, some two thousand years later, still drawing hope and strength from his resurrection. But his resurrection is not merely an historical event meant to encourage us. It is also the power of God to reconcile the world to himself: to make peace between Jews and Gentiles, heaven and earth, all in the body of Jesus his Son. When we are baptized, we are baptized into his body, and are brought to share in his death and resurrection. This means that death itself, formerly the final punctuation mark of any story, is no longer the end to our own, but rather the gateway to eternal life.

Enter the Communion of the Saints. This doctrine is at the center of Christianity because

it flows directly from the saving work of Christ, and continues in the Holy Spirit as the character of the Church. It holds that all the baptized from every age—past, present, and future-are alive together in God. It means that the Church is always more (much more!) than the sum of its parts at any given moment in time. "We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come," when God will consummate the kingdom in a new heaven and new earth; but there are moments even now when that kingdom flashes out among us, and we catch glimpses of its splendor and glory. When we pray with the saints, or ask their prayers for us, we strengthen our own connection to that kingdom which they now enjoy. When we go to church, we strengthen our relationships with our family in God, and when we make our communions, we are nourished with the bread of heaven.

More significantly, the Communion of the Saints shows us that our stories do go on, past whatever limitations, losses, and failures we might experience here and now. In this Communion, our life is "hid with Christ in God," and from that vantage point we can let the eyes of our spirits be taught by all the blessed who now behold him face to face. Whatever experiences circumstances have conspired to constrain our imaginations here in this life, in the Communion of the Saints we always have a window through which to recast our vision. Through this window the world opens up afresh, and there are new graces to discover at every turn, in every person, at every moment. The adventure story returns, and our pleasure is no longer to "tag along" vicariously through an author's narrative, but to participate fully and truly in the constantly unfolding joy of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

THREE WAYS

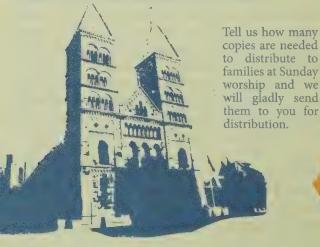
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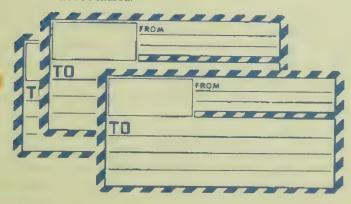
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THE UNITY OF THE SAINTS

the Rev. James C. Pappas III Fayetteville, TN

Te often think of the communion of saints as something having to do with those souls who have achieved mystical union with God in the life that is to come. But the idea needs to be larger and more practical than just that. If we cannot see that mystical communion as lived out here in the lives of the saints who make up the body of Christ on earth, then it isn't a particularly useful doctrine. The union of the life to come must be seen as a perfection of the unity lived out here, however imperfectly, in the lives of the saints who make up the Church.

In his great high priestly prayer in John's gospel, Jesus says, "Father, sanctify those you have given to me in the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth" (John 17:17-19).

Words like these from Jesus, meant to be great comfort, are unfortunately the stuff of which great fights and schisms are made. If sanctification is to be found in the truth, then those who aren't upholding the truth as we see it are not sanctified. And if they are not sanctified, then they are not true Christians. For close to two thousand years now, the idea of truth and who has it has been at the root of excommunications, anathemas, schisms, and bloodshed. Since our very beginning, Christians have been almost constantly bickering about who is or is not a real Christian. And at the heart of the fighting is always this idea of truth.

Now immediately after the words quoted above, Jesus goes on to pray, "I ask this not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their words, that they may all be one" (John 17:20-21a). Clearly Jesus does not mean for his prayer, or for this idea of truth, to be the source of bickering among us. Jesus does not mean for truth to divide us; he means for truth to unite us.

Perhaps then we should take a cue from a Roman governor of long ago and ask, "Quid est veritas?" "What is truth?" (John 18:38). It might seem funny to quote Pontius Pilate as the key to understanding Jesus, but he does ask the question that we all ought to be asking.

Before we can state affirmatively what the truth is, we first need to name some things that are *not* the truth. The Cat-

echism is not the truth. The Prayer Book is not the truth. Theology is not the truth. The Creeds are not the truth. The Bible is not the truth. This essay is not the truth. All of these things give testimony to the truth, but they are not the truth itself. If these things were the truth, then all of our two thousand years of fighting and schisms might be justified. But the truth is supposed to unite us, not divide us. The ways in which we experience the truth, the ways in which we interpret and give testimony to the truth, these are important, but we cannot confuse them for the truth.

So back to Pilate's question: "What is truth?" The answer is in a very old Latin anagram of the question. Pilate asked, "Quid est veritas?" The answer is, according to the anagram, "Est vir qui adest." Question: "What is truth?" Answer: "It is the man who is here." Pilate's question was

actually off by the letter D. Pilate asked, "quid," "what." He might better have asked, "qui," "who." Our question is most properly, "Who is the truth?" and the answer is, "Jesus." In John's gospel, Jesus has already given us the answer when he identifies himself as the way, the truth, and the life. The gospel opens with the declaration that Jesus is God's word and Jesus tells us in his high priestly prayer that God's word is truth. No story about Jesus can truly claim to be God's word. No liturgy in praise of Jesus can truly claim to be the truth. No formularies or testimony about Jesus can truly claim to be the truth. Only Jesus himself, in his flesh and in his Spirit, is the truth.

We so very desperately want the truth to be ideas. Ideas can be controlled. Ideas can be boxed in. Ideas can allow one group to be in and another to be out. But the truth is not an idea. The truth is a person. The truth is Jesus himself. And he cannot be controlled; he cannot be boxed in. And in him, it is impossible for us to divide ourselves and declare who is in and who is out.

Jesus' prayer is not that we be sanctified in an idea, or in a particular interpretation of an idea. Jesus prays to the Father that we might be sanctified in him. Iesus sanctifies himself, walks the way of the cross and dies and is raised, that we might be sanctified in him, that we might live in him, that we might find him to be the answer to the great longing question of our hearts, "What is truth?" Jesus is the truth. And Jesus calls us to live in that truth, to live in him. Jesus calls us to walk the way of the cross, to be crucified to the world, and to be raised. Iesus calls us to love him and each other and the world. Jesus calls us to be the truth just as he is the truth. Jesus calls us to live fully into the mystery of

the communion of saints, into that body of those made one by baptism into the death and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus calls us to live into an identity in God that Jesus proclaims with his own being: God in us and we in God. If we do this, then we will fulfill Jesus' prayer that we might all be one, and in us the world will know the truth.

JOINED IN COMMUNION

THE REV. STEVE RICE WINSTON SALEM, NC

Preserve time I return to my hometown, I make a visit to my mother's grave. The visit is never long. I read her name in the headstone and the dates below. I admire the yellow flowers that my father diligently keeps fresh, and I say a prayer. I linger a bit, perhaps awkwardly, not

knowing how to end the visit, and finally say, usually out loud, "Goodbye." I am somewhat surprised every time I do this. I am not an overly sentimental person. I know that her body is beneath the earth before me, and I trust that her soul is in expectant repose. Yet cor ad cor loquitur, "heart speaks to heart," and the voice of my heart intuitively rises.

In his Confessions, St. Augustine wrote about the death of his own mother. Far from home, Augustine and his brother vowed to bury her in ancestral soil. St. Monica told her grieving sons to bury her body anywhere they wished, but her one request was that she be remembered at the altar of God. She understood that while her body may rest in the earth, her soul would be on pilgrimage. She asked Augustine to remember her at the celebration of the Eucharist not only that his prayers might aid her as she grows

from strength to strength but also so that they might be together in the heavenly banquet.

remember learning in seminary years ago that the Church Fathers understood that the seemingly great chasm between the living and the dead disappeared in the Holy Eucharist. It was as if the pilgrims on earth were ushered into a liturgical wormhole that brought them to the sounds of the angelic hymn already in progress. They were at the Heavenly Banquet, not fully seated, but recipients of a foretaste of the glory to come, a glory presently enjoyed by the angels, archangels, and all the company of heaven. This shared good is the communio sanctorum, the communion of saints.

The Church has understood the communion of saints, this shared good, in two ways. There is the community of the baptized, the saints here on earth who hold things temporal and spiritual in common. And there is the fellowship of the saints across the whole state of Christ's Church: Militant, Expectant, and Triumphant. There are at least two places in the Book of Common Prayer that call us deeper into this second understanding of the mystery of the communio sanctorum. The first is in the prayers in the Burial Office (Rite I) where we ask God's help "in the midst of things we cannot understand, to believe and trust in the communion of saints." The prayer book reminds us that God is not the God of the dead, but of the living (Mark 12.26). "Life is changed," the Requiem preface tells us, "not ended" in death. Therefore the funeral isn't therapy for the living who are grieving in the pews; it is our duty to the dead, who are now alive in Christ, to pray for them as they "increase in the knowledge" of God. The

faithful departed are in Christ, and we, the faithful still in our earthly pilgrimage, are in Christ, and so in him we enjoy a communion more intimate than touch. Far from science fiction or séance, this is the Body of Christ, which extends far beyond parish boundaries and membership rolls. This is why St. Monica asked Augustine to remember her at the altar. How many lives have been derailed by the death of one so dearly loved? Like all parish priests, I see so many well-intentioned attempts at making connections those who have died. Sentiment overrides theology and our faithful seek solace in releasing balloons and carrying cremated remains in lockets In their grief they bottle hope and throw it in the ocean and wait for a message to return which of course, it doesn't, because it can't. Our intuition tells us that we are still connected, despite the painful rupture death brings, but it is

only in Christ and in the Holy Eucharist where communion can be found. May we believe and trust in this.

The second place, perhaps surprisingly, is during the Ash Wednesday liturgy. After the saying or singing of Psalm 51, the Litany of Penitence begins with a confession to God the Father, to one another, "and to the whole communion of saints in heaven and on earth" This, in essence, is a paraphrase of the Confiteor, where we confess to the Blessed Mary Ever Virgin, Blessed Michael the Archangel, Blessed John the Baptist, Peter and Paul, etc. Why "on earth" would we confess to them? Despite our wishes otherwise, and subsequent justification, our sins are not self-contained. Even if we seem to only wound ourselves, others still feel our wound. Our sins keep us from being fully present and fully active in the Body of Christ and that distance impacts on

communion. We confess to each other and to the whole communion of saints because we are accountable to each other in our baptismal fellowship. But even more, we confess to the communion of saints so that we may benefit from their example and their prayers. The highway of prayer has two lanes. We pray for those who have died so that they may grow from strength to strength, and we ask those we know are already strong in the presence of God to pray for us. We have no problem at all asking others to pray for us. We certainly have no problem airing our troubles and failures on social media and over a cup of coffee to a trusted friend or sometimes even a stranger. Why not trust that the Body of Christ extends into a greater mystery? Why not include those who lived and died with heroic faith to pray for us and, like incense, throw their prayers on the hot coals of Christ's love so they ascend to the Father? May God help us to believe and trust in his great gift and promise of the communion of saints.

Every time I go to the cemetery that keeps my mother's grave, I know that my gut-feelings are trustworthy and sound. I know that the love she had for me, and I for her, has not vanished. Like Augustine, I pray for my mother at the altar and I believe and trust in that communion that the Church promises. I believe and trust in that communion which is not self-serving or purely sentimental, but a communion that is real and holy because it is bound and anchored in the Glorified Christ. The Communion of Saints has its power not because we are joined to each other, but because we are all joined to our Lord Jesus.

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

THE REV. IAN WETMORE O'FALLON, IL

y far my favorite part of the Prayer Book is what we call the General Thanksgiving. It's called a general thanksgiving because, like the General Confession. it's meant to be prayed by all the congregation, and it covers all the bases. In fact, one of the key words it uses repeatedly is one that I've just used repeatedly: "all." It even begins with that word by addressing God as "Almighty," which is a contraction of "all mighty/powerful." God holds all power over all things in his hands. We use that word (almighty) all the time in the liturgy, probably without really considering what it means most of the time. "Almighty God, unto whom all hearts be open..."; "I believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker

of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible..."; "Almighty and everliving God..."; "Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Maker of all things, Judge of all men..."; "...and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost..." This is who we worship and who we love above all others, not because he is almighty, however, but just because he is God. Or to put it even more succinctly, and more mysteriously, just because he is.

In the General Thanksgiving, we go on to address our Almighty God as "Father of all mercies." What is mercy? We usually think of it as something like pity, as when people with some sort of affliction pleaded with Jesus for mercy, but it's much more than that. Mercy is the compassionate love of God for his creatures. We pray for his mercy in particular ways,

depending on our needs. Even though we may not know exactly what we need, like the person who goes to the doctor seeking relief from a pain or an ailment that he can't really identify, we simply ask God for his mercy, trusting that he knows what we need. In fact, the most common prayer offered up to God is, "Lord, have mercy." How many times do we say that in an hour on Sunday morning? Whenever I see an ambulance or fire truck on the move, I pray, "Lord, have mercy." Whenever I hear bad news about someone, or listen to a grieving relative struggle with a eulogy, or even when I listen to the news, I pray, "Lord, have mercy." It's the prayer for all occasions, which is why it's so much a part of the Church's liturgies.

Almighty God is the "Father of all mercies," *i.e.*, our all-powerful God is the source of all the good things

that we have and that happen to us. So we give him "most humble and hearty thanks for all [his] goodness and loving-kindness To us and to all men... We bless [him] for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life." We bless God for blessing us-for creating us in the first place, and for preserving us (keeping us alive and well). We all thank and bless our allmighty God for all the ways he blesses us and is merciful to us. That's not something we get together to do only on Thanksgiving Day; that is the ideal Christian attitude every day of life. We should all thank God every morning when we wake up and every evening when we lie down, and every time something good happens, even though it may not be very pleasant, like sitting down to lima beans or cauliflower, or having little samples of blood drawn out of your arm at the hospital.

"But above all," the General Thanksgiving continues above all the many ways God has blessed us and been merciful to us-we thank him for his "inestimable love In the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ." There's a word that doesn't fall off the tongue easily—inestimable—something that cannot be estimated. We can't even guess at the tremendous measure of love that God has for us, that moved him to lie down on the cross to redeem us. It's inestimable, immeasurable; because it's infinite. there's no end of it. And our finite little minds can't even comprehend the immensity of that love, or the fact that God has that much love for each one of us. Even if we could respond to the first and greatest commandment by actually loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, it wouldn't come close to the inestimable love he has for us.

That our all-mighty God, whom the universe cannot contain, so humbled himself to enter into the womb of a pure teenage girl, and, being born as a helpless baby, put himself at the mercy of his creatures, many of whom later rejected him, tortured him, and finally killed him in a most cruel way, and then to rise from the grave-by all of this he opened up to us the fountain of his limitless grace, and he fills us with the hope of everlasting life with him. He did all this, as the General Thanksgiving says, "For the means of grace, And for the hope of glory." And it's all just a very small taste of his inestimable love for us.

So the big question is, how do we respond to that kind of love, to that kind of mercy? Are we even capable of responding in an adequate way? Well, yes we are. Because God has given us the ability—the grace—to respond in the Per-

son of his Son, who is himself "the means of grace." Jesus is the way we respond, the way we give God the Father our "most humble and hearty thanks for all [his] goodness and loving-kindness." St. Paul says that "if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom 10.9). As the Word of God, Jesus is the supreme expression of divine love. He is everything that God has to say to us. And Jesus is the only thing that we can say to God in response to that love. He is our thanksgiving to God.

He is our Eucharist—that's the Greek word for thanksgiving. And that's what we do in Church every week. We come seeking Jesus, and he really does speak to us through the proclamation of his Gospel, and he really does feed us with his Body and Blood in the sacrament of the Altar.

And having been nourished by him and filled with him, the only way we can possibly respond is by putting our thanksgiving into action: "By giving up ourselves to [his] service, And by walking before [him] in holiness and righteousness all our days." Loving him in return, loving who he loves, and loving the way he loves—that's what it is to walk before him in holiness and righteousness.

Having died with Christ in baptism, and having been filled with him in our eucharistic worship, we are part of his Body. As St. Paul puts it, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2.20). Living for the God who lives in us, "giving up ourselves to [his] service"—that is how we give thanks.

DEATHS

THE REV. EDGAR GEORGE ADAMS, SR., 83, in Richmond, VA.

A graduate of the Philadelphia Divinity School, he was ordained in 1959 and served parishes in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia. He also served as a Navy chaplain. At the time of his death he was priest associate at St. Mark's, Richmond.

THE REV. JAMES M. HINDLE, 89, in Hendersonville, NC.

A 1952 graduate of General Theological Seminary in New York City, he served parishes in Mt. Holly, Tryon, and Greensboro, North Carolina. His first and final parish was in Bat Cave at the Church

of the Transfiguration. He also served as chaplain and headmaster of the Bethany School in Cincinnati and as chaplain at Christ School in Arden, SC.

THE REV. KEITH JOHNSON, 53, in Harlem, NY.

A graduate of Virginia Theological Seminary, he was ordained in 2001 and served parishes in Florida, California, and Louisiana before being called as rector of St. Philip's, Harlem, in 2012. He was one of six Fellows in the Faith and Justice Fellowship program under the Federation of Protestant Welfare and Agencies and New York Theological Seminary.

CONNECTING

THE RT. REV. RUSTIN KIMSEY, 79, in The Dalles, OR.

A 1960 graduate of the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge, MA, he served parishes in Redmond, Baker City, and The Dalles. While serving on the Church's Executive Council from 1969-1982, he was the Episcopal Church's priest representative to the Anglican Consultative Council. He was consecrated as the fifth bishop of the Diocese of Eastern Oregon in 1980 and served until retiring in 2000. He also served as assisting bishop of Navajoland from 2005-2006 and as assisting bishop of the Diocese of Alaska from 2009-2010.

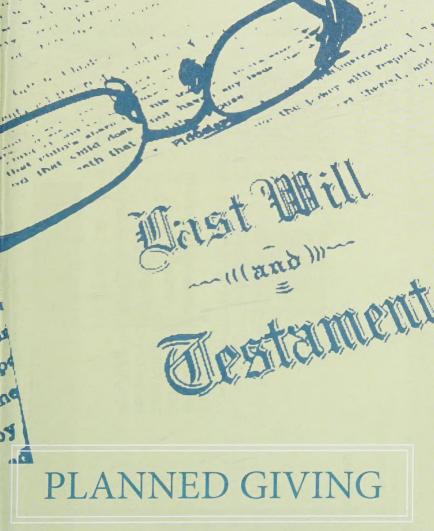
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